

Gil Green's Testament on America

THE ENEMY FORGOTTEN,
by Gilbert Green, International Publishers, New York.
318 pages. \$2.50

Reviewed by ROB F. HALL

GIL GREEN'S "The Enemy Forgotten" is one of the most important — and most readable — books to have come out of the American Left for more than a decade. It was written some time during those years, between July 2, 1951 when Green became a political refugee, and February 1956, when he surrendered at Foley Square in New York to serve a Smith Act term in prison.

The circumstances of its origin have, therefore, a dramatic quality of their own. One can imagine the difficulties under which it was written, the problems of an author making use of libraries (for there is solid and substantial scholarship in this work) while his picture adorns a thousand Post Office bulletin boards, and who knows how many FBI agents hunting high and low for him as if he were a criminal.

But Gil Green, of course, was no criminal. He was a fugitive, as he has himself stated, "not from justice but from injustice."

HE CHOSE this method of fighting McCarthyism, repression and the war drive,—as a fugitive—he says "out of the very greatest love—for those closest and dearest to me—my own flesh and blood—and for the human family of which we are all members." One may disagree with his decision, but one cannot doubt the integrity of his motive. For his devotion to the human family, and especially to his own American people, burns like a bright flame throughout the pages of this

book. It is the testament of an American Communist, in the year 1956, designed to explain in the first place to the non-Communist American what his party stands for, the basis for its position, and the perspective of a better life which it holds for all Americans.

In prison or in the shadow of prison, a man is likely to get down to bedrock in his thinking. He must re-examine old assumptions, weigh again long-standing conclusions, and distill the essentially true from the half-true or the erroneous. What he emerges with is not only a set of values with which he can live but a message which he wants to communicate with others. I suspect that Gil Green's almost five years of "exile" impressed upon him as never before the great gap between the truth about Communists, with all their mistakes, and the false and distorted picture of them which the average American carries around in his head.

HE DID NOT, however, set out to write a book about the Communist Party. He is concerned with finding the answer to why our nation, at the height of the New Deal enjoying democratic rights and benefitting from a series of social and welfare measures, spent the next 10 years retracing its steps. He examines the postwar years to discover "why this nation permitted itself to be taken so perilously close to the 'brink' of a world war and a domestic version of fascism."

This postwar development was not inevitable, Green points out, because the people and their organizations had the power to disarm the warmakers and, as events showed, unhorse McCarthy.

"The reason is that some lost

sight of the traditional foe, while many relegated it to second place in their thinking. They were misled into seeing a fictitious foe."

The obscuring of the traditional foe, corporate big business, is the concept which gave the book its title, "The Enemy Forgotten."

The fiction which served this enemy of the people so well was that the socialist countries of the world, especially the Soviet Union, and advocates of socialism in the United States, especially the Communist Party, were a peril to our nation.

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THE GREAT progressive tradition of our country, Green shows, is the democratic pressure of the people for their rights against the power of the entrenched interests. Our great advances have occurred when there was the greatest unity directed clear-sightedly against those interests.

Green believes that during the past 18 months the American people have begun to glimpse the true outlines of the real enemy and he is confident that "a new progressive upsurge is in the making and that, when it occurs, it will not start newborn. It will rest upon past experience and borrow heavily from the progressive slogans and traditions of yesterday."

BUT GREEN does not suggest that the road to peace, democracy, and the people's welfare is a well-paved boulevard. There are many problems to be solved: the continuing suppression of civil liberties; the disproportionate expenditures for arms as against schools, hospitals and houses; the crisis in leadership in the labor movement; the Dixiecrat stranglehold



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on the South; the persistent power of monopoly.

There are also questions of tactics and strategy upon which there has been little discussion and no agreement. The anti-Communist obsession has proved costly to the people's movements, and Green sees little progress possible unless the democratic forces include in their alliance the American left.

"There is something in common between Communists and all other democratic forces, as much as some liberals may dis-

claim this," writes Green, "The Communists are not opponents of democracy. On the contrary they seek to extend democracy as far as it can go under the capitalist system."

And under socialism, which is the goal of the Communists, Green adds elsewhere in the book, "different political parties . . . could continue to exist. No political party or group would be denied access to the political arena so long as it abided

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by the majority will of the people."

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THE GROPING of the American people toward a new political alignment suggests the vehicle through which the democratic pressure will be expressed. "There already exist the rudimentary outlines of a loose, amorphous alliance between the labor movement, the Negro people, a section of the farming population, and liberal circles of the small business and professional middle class," Green says.

This development is taking place within the framework of the two-party system, and specifically in the Democratic Party. And while these forces do not reject the idea of a third party in principle, says Green, they regard it as impractical, at least for the present.

While recognizing the weight of big business in the Democratic Party, Green cites the growing influence of labor in that party and rejects the thesis that there is no difference between the GOP and the Democrats. At this point Green seems to be on the verge of suggesting that the Labor-Farmer Party can develop within the Democratic Party; that it may be created, in fact, by the act of labor transforming that party from an organization of conflicting interests into a people's party led by labor. And while he does not draw this conclusion specifically, his facts as well as his argumentation lead directly to this conclusion.

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WRITING as a Communist, Green deals with the Communist position on many questions and he does not hesitate to indicate where he thinks his party has made errors. He contends that the slogan of "self-determination for the black belt" should long ago have been abandoned in recognition of the Negro people's drive toward integration. He recognizes that

the forms of organization and methods of work of Communists have made the party appear as sinister or alien to American workers.

"It must be admitted," he writes, "that the Communist Party has not always taken these specific factors sufficiently into account and has made errors which frequently made it easier for calumny to be cast its way."

I think, however, Green has accepted too easily the explanation that the split in the working class, both here and abroad, is due entirely to the "betrayal of socialist principles by Right-wing Socialist leaders." The Communists bear a heavy responsibility also for this split, a fact to which the revelations of the 20 Congress of the Soviet Party (occurring, it should be said, since Green wrote his book) attest.

But in common with many Communists—and ahead of a lot of them—Green sees a large area of agreement between Communists and Socialists and other socialist-minded Americans.

"The day will come," says Green, "when the best of these forces, and many more who have not yet spoken out, will unite together with the Communists to form a single, united party of socialism in the Unit-

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tion of Germany on the basis of a victory for **SOCIALISM**.

The plan provides for breaking of West Germany's ties with NATO and east Germany's tie to the Warsaw military alliance. With a victory for the socialist at the polls, and the inauguration of a policy of socialism for the country, the socialist order in East Germany, too would be preserved.

The plan also calls for establishment of peaceful relations with the USSR and all socialist countries; normal relations with Peoples China and end of the